

WYCOMBE Wanderers are off to Italy again on Sunday for a week's tour which includes two friendly matches (writes Stuart Earp).

This is the second year running the Blues have toured in Italy. Last season they were involved in the Anglo-Italian Inter-League semi-professional tournament when they stayed in Riccione and played Teramo and Pistoiese.

Manager John Reardon, who was given full charge of the team a fortnight ago after taking over the last weeks of the season as caretaker boss, has a useful squad of tourists with him, including seven guest players.

Among the guests are two familiar ex-Wanderers, John Delaney and Geoff Anthony. John was in last year's team and played a major role in the Anglo-Italian matches. Welshman Geoff, a local schoolteacher, spent several years at Loakes Park in two spells. Both were playing for Hayes in the Rothmans Isthmian League last season.

The two Loughborough College lads who played in Wycombe's friendlies at the end of the season, are also included — Steve Voss and Neil Wheeldon. The tour will

give them useful experience as it did two of Wycombe's players last year.

John Priestly and Bob Davies played their first games for Wanderers in Italy last year and it was tough baptism for both. Yet when they returned they played an important role in the Blues squad and Davies in particular had a fine season.

Skipper for the tour is last season's captain Keith Mead while leading goalscorer Ian Pearson is also making the

trip. It will be interesting to see how Ian fares against the notoriously tough Italian defences.

FIRST MATCH

The other guests are Glen Darnell, the Oswestry centre-half, who played in Wycombe's 1-1 draw with Gateshead and two goalkeepers. Neither John Maskell nor Peter Spittle were able to make the trip and so Ian Bath of Hayes

and Burnham's Eddie Junger have filled in.

The tourists leave by coach from Loakes Park on Sunday and fly from Gatwick to Rimini. First match is on Tuesday (June 7) when they meet Riccione.

Riccione play in Division 3 of the Italian League and this season have been struggling to avoid relegation. They have only a couple of matches left and are one of seven clubs who could go down as only four points separates those last seven.

Wanderers will have some idea of what is facing them in this

friendly as both Teramo and Pistoiese play in the same division. Pistoiese, in fact, are certain of promotion this year as they are top. Having seen their set up last year, their success is hardly surprising. They have a marvellous stadium in Pistoiese and they certainly seemed to be going places when Wanderers visited them. Teramo, a club more in line with Wycombe, are placed seventh this year.

Riccione themselves have a good stadium and Wycombe will remember it well after training there last season when preparing for their Anglo-Italian matches.

There is some doubt as to who will be Wanderers' other opponents on Thursday, June 9. It will be either Rimini or Cesena.

INJURY RISK

Everything depends on Rimini's situation in the league as they are currently fighting to avoid the drop from the Second Division. They stage their last league match on June 12 and if relegation is hanging on that game, they obviously will not want to risk injury by playing the Blues on Thursday.

Cesena are a First Division club who play the likes of Juventus and Inter Milan. Wanderers will play their Under 21 team with a few older players thrown in, should the Rimini game be off. This will give Wanderers a real testing for although Cesena, which is situated some 20 kilometres from Rimini, are bottom of the Division 1 table, they will still present a major challenge to Wanderers.

Here again, the facilities are likely to be excellent as Cesena are a famous club and have attracted gates of up to 20,000 for top league games. In 1975 they competed in the UEFA Cup when they finished in fourth place in Division 1.

Wycombe have established a good relationship with Italian clubs in recent years. It started when they played AC Monza two years ago on a home and away basis to decide the Anglo-Italian Non-League Cup. Wanderers won 2-1 on aggregate, winning the second leg 2-0 at Loakes Park in front of a 3,000 plus crowd.

SEMI-PRO

The following year they were invited to compete in the Inter-League Semi-Pro tournament and made a big impression by becoming the only club to avoid disciplinary trouble in the four matches. They beat Pistoiese and Teramo at home but lost to both in Italy and in the end it was Wimbledon who qualified from the English clubs. They lost to Monza in the final.

Monza, incidentally, have achieved the remarkable feat of going from the Third Division to the First in three seasons. They are top of Division Two and are certain to be joining the Division One giants next year.

Wanderers will be flying back on Sunday evening on June 12.

TOUR PARTY

Officials: R. Williams, B. Lee, J. Godsway, C. Richardson, H. Hart, G. Ross, P. Williams, S. Voss, N. Wheeldon, J. Sheppard. **Players:** K. Mead (Capt), M. Holfield, G. Mackenzie, S. Hill, I. Pearson, J. Priestley, A. Horseman, W. Roberts, J. Delaney, S. Voss, N. Wheeldon, G. Anthony, G. Darnell, I. Bath, E. Junger. **Press:** S. Earp.



Flashback to 1975 when Wanderers won the Anglo-Italian Cup. Pictured above is the squad that lost 1-0 in Monza. They took the second leg 2-0 to win 2-1 on aggregate.